

Message Text

PAGE 01 PRETOR 05651 091516Z

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ACTION AF-08

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRETORIA 5651

USIAC FOR IAA

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: USIS SOWETO READING ROOM

REF: TELKINS/HUGHES TELECON DECEMBER 8

FOLLOWING INFORMATION RESPONDS TO QUESTIONS IN REF TELECON:

1. SOWETO READING ROOM (RR) IS OPEN MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY, NOON UNTIL 2000 HOURS, FRIDAYS NOON UNTIL 1700 HOURS. IT IS DIRECTED BY ONE STAFF MEMBER, FSL ZUKO TOFILE. SINCE JUNE OF THIS YEAR, ABILITY TO PROGRAM IN SOWETO HAS BEEN LIMITED BECAUSE OF TENSION IN TOWNSHIP IN AFTERMATH OF DISTURBANCES. ACTIVE POLICE SURVEILLANCE HAS AT TIMES SCARED POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS AWAY. NEVERTHELESS, OVER PAST FOUR MONTHS TREND IS TOWARD GREATER USE OF RR. MORE IMPORTANT, DIRECTOR TOFILE IS RESPECTED AND TRUSTED BY MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE GROUP IN SOWETO, I.E., STUDENTS. THAT IS WHY IT WAS POSSIBLE DURING LAST TWO WEEKS TO ARRANGE FOR CONGRESSWOMAN COLLINS, SENATOR CLARK AND PENNSYLVANIA ASSEMBLYMAN JOSEPH RHODES TO MEET AND HAVE INDIVIDUAL RAP SESSIONS WITH STUDENT LEADERS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN ON-THE-RUN SINCE JUNE BECAUSE THEY ARE WANTED BY THE POLICE.

2. STATISTICAL DATA:

A. SIZE OF READING ROOM: 460 SQUARE FEET

B. NUMBER OF BOOKS: 607 VOLUMES (JULY 30, 1976)

C. NUMBER OF PERIODICALS (CALENDAR YEAR 1976: 12

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PAGE 02 PRETOR 05651 091516Z

EDUCATION DIGEST

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SATURDAY REVIEW

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

BLACK ENTERPRISE

ESSENCE

HIGH FIDELITY/MUSICAL AMERICA

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED TIME (ATLANTIC)

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

EBONY (ORDERED WHEN BAN WAS LIFTED LAST MONTH)

D. ATTENDANCE (1976) E. CIRCULATION OF BOOKS (1976)

MARCH	379	159
APRIL	251	111
MAY	255	117
JUNE	162	86
JULY	218	113
AUGUST	96	50
SEPTEMBER	112	72
OCTOBER	140	100
NOVEMBER	198	142

3. CLOSINGS DUE TO DISTURBANCES: GENERAL GROUND RULES FOR CLOSING AS LAID DOWN BY CONGEN JOHNSON AND BPAO WERE TO DO SO WHENEVER TENSION, IN OPINION OF TOFILE, BECAME SUCH THAT TO STAY OPEN MIGHT INVITE TROUBLE. IN THIS REGARD, TOFILE MAINTAINED CLOSE LIAISON WITH DIRECTOR OF YMCA (WHERE READING ROOM IS HOUSED), WHO GENERALLY FOLLOWED SAME POLICY OF CLOSING IF HE THOUGHT TENSION LEVEL DANGEROUSLY HIGH. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT YMCA AND YWCA IN SOWETO ARE ONLY TWO TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY CENTERS NOT CONNECTED IN ANY WAY WITH WEST RAND BOARD--SAG AUTHORITY ADMINISTERING BLACK AFFAIRS--AND THEREFORE ARE RESPECTED AND RELATIVELY IMMUNE FROM ATTACK BY SOWETO RESIDENTS EVEN IN TIMES OF DISORDER.)

4. RECORD OF CLOSINGS:

JUNE 16 TO JUNE 26 -- SOWETO RIOTS

AUGUST 4 TO AUGUST 6 -- OBSERVANCE OF STAY-AT-HOME BOYCOTT

AUGUST 23 TO SEPT 8 -- ZUKO TOFILE WORKING AT U.S.

PAVILION, SWAZILAND TRADE FAIR. (TENSION LEVEL IN SOWETO EXTREMELY HIGH DURING THIS TWO-WEEK PERIOD.)

SEPT 13 TO SEPT 17 -- OBSERVANCE OF STAY-AT-HOME BOYCOTT AND KISSINGER VISIT WHERE TOFILE ASSISTED IN PRETORIA.

5. NOV 29 DIGGS SESSION: SESSION WHERE REP. DIGGS, REP.

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PAGE 03 PRETOR 05651 091516Z

COLLINS, AND DR. CHALLENGER HAD OPPORTUNITY MEET CROSS- SECTION SOWETO COMMUNITY LEADERS ORGANIZED BY USIS NOVEMBER 29 IN SOWETO READING ROOM. PARTY ACCOMPANIED BY CONSUL GENERAL W.M. JOHNSON AND EMBOFFS RICHARD BALTIMORE AND PETER EICHER ARRIVED AT READING ROOM AT 0930 HOURS. DIGGS MET AT ENTRANCE TO YMCA BY BPAO JACOBSEN AND RR DIRECTOR ZUKO TOFILE. NEITHER BEFORE NOR AFTER TWO-HOUR SESSION DID DIGGS COMMENT TO USIS PERSONNEL ABOUT READING ROOM OR ITS ACTIVITIES, NOR DID HE, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, ADDRESS ANY QUESTIONS TO STAFFERS OR OTHERS ABOUT THE READING ROOM.

FOLLOWING INFORMATION LEARNED TODAY: AFTER SESSION IN

SOWETO, ON WAY TO AIRPORT TRAVELING WITH CONGEN JOHNSON, DIGGS INDICATED HIS DISPLEASURE WITH READING ROOM. CONGEN JOHNSON REPORTS THAT DIGGS FELT PRESENT READING ROOM WAS NOT WHAT DIGGS HAD IN MIND WHEN HE WANTED "AMERICAN LIBRARY" ESTABLISHED IN SOWETO. HE FELT ROOM WAS TOO SMALL AND COLLECTION TOO MEAGER TO PROPERLY REPRESENT AMERICA IN TOWNSHIP. HE WANTED SEPARATE BUILDING, "SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF." WHEN DIGGS ASKED WHY READING ROOM WAS SO LIMITED, JOHNSON RESPONDED HE DID NOT KNOW BUT ASSUMED MATTER WAS QUESTION OF LIMITED FUNDS. DIGGS RESPONDED ALONG LINES THAT IF THAT WERE THE CASE, AS A MEMBER OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, HE WAS GOING TO APPROACH USIA WITH VIEW TOWARD GETTING COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISH PROPER AMERICAN LIBRARY IN SOWETO. AT NO TIME DID DIGGS INDICATE ANY DISSATISFACTION WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETING. ON CONTRARY, HE SEEMED QUITE PLEASED WITH GROUP ASSEMBLED.

6. INCREASED RESOURCE: OVER PAST FEW MONTHS, PROBLEM OF USIS PROGRAMMING IN SOWETO AT READING ROOM HAS BEEN ONE OF UNSTABLE, TENSE TOWNSHIP SITUATION RATHER THAN LACK OF FUNDS. NORMALLY, USIS WOULD EXPECT TO PROGRAM FILMS AND U.S. VISITORS THERE, JUST AS WE PROGRAM THEM AT SHAKESPEARE HOUSE IN JOHANNESBURG. OBVIOUSLY, IF COUNTRY BUDGET IS EXPANDED THERE WOULD BE MORE RESOURCES TO SPEND IN BRINGING ATTRACTIONS TO SOUTH AFRICA, AND SOWETO WOULD SHARE IN BENEFITS OF INCREASED PROGRAMMING, AS SITUATION PERMITS.

ACCORDING TO CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN JOHNSON, HOWEVER, CONCERN OF CONGRESSMAN DIGGS WAS PHYSICAL PLANT ITSELF. POST WOULD BE WILLING INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 04 PRETOR 05651 091516Z

READING ROOM IN SEPARATE BUILDING IF AGENCY SO DESIRES, BUT MISSION RECOMMENDS AGAINST THIS AT THIS TIME. MISSION FEELS SUCCESS SO FAR OF READING ROOM HAS BEEN AT LEAST PARTIALLY BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN "LOW-KEY" WAY WITHOUT EXCESSIVE FANFARE, TOFILE HAS MANAGED TO WALK THE NARROW LINE IN AVOIDING GATHERINGS WHICH COULD BE CONSIDERED SUBVERSIVE, AND FACILITY ITSELF IS MODEST--IN NO WAY ATTEMPTING TO SUBSTITUTE FOR USIS JOHANNESBURG OFFICE, BUT INSTEAD ACTING TO COMPLEMENT SHAKESPEARE HOUSE. FACT THAT READING ROOM IS LOCATED IN RESPECTED NON-GOVT INSTITUTION (YMCA) HAS KEPT IT SAFE FROM ATTACK DURING DISTURBANCES. IT SHOULD ALSO BE KEPT IN MIND THAT TRANSPORTATION WITHIN SOWETO IS POORT TO NONEXISTENT. IT IS EASIER FOR BLACKS WORKING IN JOHANNESBURG TO USE SHAKESPEARE HOUSE THAN SOWETO RR BECAUSE OF THE TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM. FURTHER-MORE, MANY BLACKS PREFER TO USE THE MULTIRACIAL FACILITY AT SHAKESPEARE HOUSE THAN WHAT THEY REGARD AS A GHETTO FACILITY WITHIN SOWETO. IN LOOKING AT FIGURES ON USE OF RR THESE TWO FACTORS WHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND.

IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER SAG WOULD ACQUIESCE TO A USG

ESTABLISHMENT IN SOWETO WHICH HAD A HIGHER PROFILE,
ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF RECENT PUBLICITY IN BOTH THE U.S.
AND RSA ABOUT USG ACTIVITIES IN THIS COUNTRY.

7. SPECIFIC FUNCTION DURING RIOTS: DURING HEAT OF RIOTS,
READING ROOM REMAINED CLOSED. ONLY NOTEWORTHY FUNCTION OF
FACILITY DURING PERIOD OF DISTURBANCES IS THAT DIRECTOR
TOFILE REMAINED ON DUTY AT YMCA MOST OF THE TIME WEVEN WHEN
USIS READING ROOM WAS CLOSED. AS PERSON ON THE SCENE,
WHEN TELEPHONE CONTACT WAS ESTABLISHED WITH SOWETO, HE
WAS ABLE TO GIVE CONGEN ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AND EYE-
WITNESS ACCOUNT OF UNREST AND POLICE REACTION.
HUGHES

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